

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 001368

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/20/2014

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [VE](#)

SUBJECT: JULIO BORGES LEANS TOWARDS ACCEPTING

Classified By: DCM STEPHEN G. MCFARLAND FOR REASONS 1.4 (d)

-----  
SUMMARY

1. (C) Julio Borges told DCM and PolOff April 21 that Primero Justicia would decide whether to participate in the signature verification process once the National Electoral Council released details of the plan on April 23 or 24, with an opposition decision likely 24 hours later. He seemed to be leaning towards participating in the process, which the DCM encouraged. Borges stressed the need for the international community's support. He said the opposition had less than a 50% chance of verifying enough signatures to activate the referendum.

-----  
Need more information

2. (C) Julio Borges, the President of Primero Justicia (PJ), Deputy in the National Assembly, and one of the leaders of the opposition coalition Democratic Coordinator (CD), met with DCM and PolOff on April 21. Reacting to the National Electoral Council's (CNE) announcement the night before of the regulations for the signature verification (reparo) process, Borges insisted that PJ needed two more pieces of information before it could take a decision. One was the number of tables there would be at each center. Borges is worried that if there are not sufficient tables, some people may have to wait up to 7 hours, according to PJ's calculation. The second point is just which signatures would have to be verified, and in what areas. According to Borges, the CNE has already changed the numbers 5 times, and seems to be blatantly manipulating them. He said that the first report from the CNE indicated that 50,000 signatures in opposition controlled Baruta, which is part of greater Caracas, had to be verified. The figure in the latest report is 6,000. The signatures to be verified are being transferred to Chavista controlled states, making it much harder, and more dangerous, for the opposition to mobilize people. It also leads Borges to suspect the entire process is a massive fraud by the CNE. For this reason, Borges wants to see the final number before agreeing to anything. Jorge Rodriguez, one of the directors of the CNE, told Borges the information would be ready by April 23 or 24. Borges said he thought the opposition would come to a decision within 24 hours of getting the information. He said to forget about trying to get a referendum before August 19th, because the GOV will never let it happen.

-----  
Unity of opposition key

3. (C) Borges declared that the unity of the opposition was of utmost importance at this time. He said he suspected that the GOV's real intention with the reparos was to split the opposition. He saw Proyecto Venezuela (PV), led by Henrique Salas Romer, as the greatest threat to that unity at this time. PV has made its opposition to the reparo process well known. Borges stated that any help the USG could give in that regard would be very useful to the CD. Borges said that if the opposition decides to accept the challenge of the reparos, then it will be the opposition's last chance to stop Chavez, and the CD must present it that way to the public, and not as one more attempt to get rid of him. He said he believed the people wanted to go to reparos, despite the bad odds, rather than refusing to participate, and challenging the legitimacy of the CNE.

-----  
Odds not good

4. (C) Borges stated that the opposition's odds of getting the needed signatures were not good. Under the best of circumstances, with no disruption whatsoever from the Chavistas, he thought the opposition had a 50% chance of getting the signatures. Even relatively mild interference, like sending pro-GOV people to wait on line and check if they were on the lists, could bring that down. Violence and fear would make it even more difficult.

-----  
DCM encourages participation  
-----

15. (C) The DCM told Borges that A/S Noriega had expressed great interest in the decision facing the opposition. The decision was the opposition's to make, but it represented a very important opportunity and needed to be assessed carefully. He said the international community would participate as observers if the opposition agreed. The DCM indicated that the decision by the Electoral Chamber of the Supreme Court, that the signatures should be accepted, was not very useful outside Venezuela, where the objections of the Constitutional Chamber and potentially the full Supreme Court tended to nullify the effect of the Electoral decision.

-----  
International observers  
-----

16. (C) Borges said that the opposition was essentially jumping into a swimming pool without water by going to reparos. He supported it because the people wanted to, and to split the opposition would be worse. He insisted, however, that it was up to the international community to tell the world "who took the water out of the pool." In this regard, Borges declared himself satisfied with the attitude of the OAS, but thought that the Carter Center, and especially Francisco Diez, were too wishy-washy in criticizing the GOV, and too eager to be liked by everyone.

-----  
COMMENT  
-----

17. (C) Borges is clearly leaning towards accepting the reparos. While he made the case for pursuing more favorable terms through the court system, he agreed with us that the judicial route would be long and ultimately fruitless. He is, however, very nervous that the opposition will lose the reparos, and thus legitimize the CNE and GOV by accepting their manipulation of the process. He does not want to be the one that splits the CD, though, and so will tend to accept a bad deal, depending upon what more information/rules the CNE provides the CD on April 23/24.  
SHAPIRO

NNNN

2004CARACA01368 - CONFIDENTIAL